

District 25 News

MAKIKI, TANTALUS, MCCULLY, PAPAOLEA

APRIL 2010

The Shortlist

SUNDAY, APRIL 18 @ 10 am - Noon Mini Recycling Drive & Build-a-Bucket Garden, Makiki District Park

Join Makiki Community Library's Keiki Program and Representative Belatti in celebration of Earth Day at the Park. Activities include building your own bucket garden (for keiki ages 4-12) and a mini recycling drive for cell phones, printer cartridges, laptop computers only, used eye glasses, hearing aids and HI-5 recyclables. Space is limited for Bucket Garden activity. For more information or to RSVP for Bucket Garden event, contact Representative Belatti at 586-9425 or at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.

MONDAY, APRIL 19 @ 6:30 - 8:00 pm
Makiki Dog Park Meeting
Makiki District Park, Arts & Crafts Bldg
Advocates for a Makiki Community Dog Park meet monthly to discuss efforts for a dog park at Makiki District Park. All dog lovers and volunteers are invited to attend. For more information contact Terry Conlan at 561-5171 or at terryconlan@aol.com.

SUNDAY, APRIL 25 @ 10 am - 2 pm Makiki Community Library Work Day Makiki District Park

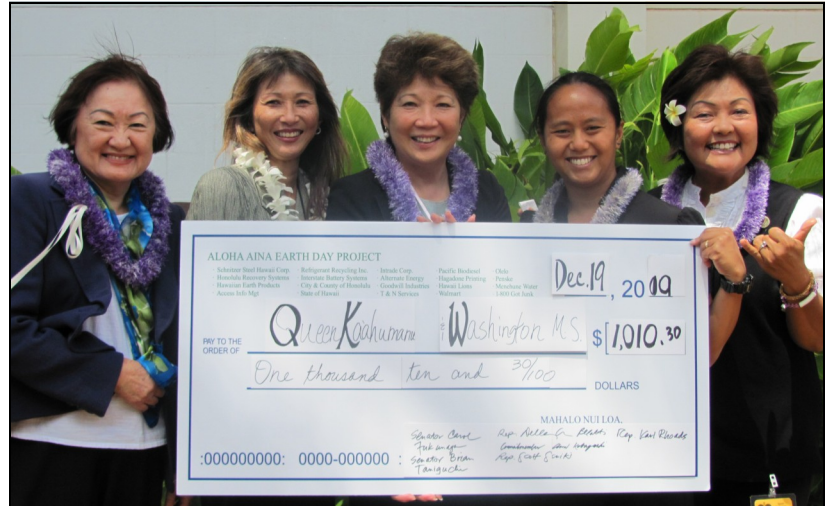
For those of you who miss our little Library, join Friends of the Makiki Community Library as they prepare the Library after its closure due to electrical upgrades. Volunteers are needed to reshelve books, move furniture, clean and dust. For more information about this work day, contact Wendy at wenmax@hotmail.com.

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To comment on something written in *District 25 News*, please write to:

Representative Della Au Belatti
State Capitol, Room 331
Honolulu, HI 96813
repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov

An electronic copy may also be downloaded from the Representative's House Majority web page at <http://sites.google.com/site/hawaiihouseblog/repdellaaubelatti>



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

As the 2010 legislative session enters its final weeks, legislators are immersed in budget negotiations and conference committees. This part of the session can often be the most confusing and hectic as legislators and staffers work at reconciling differences between Senate and House versions of bills. This month's *District 25 News* features one such bill in conference committee, House Bill 2003, which seeks to recodify Hawaii's campaign spending laws and provide more transparency for corporate donations.

Future *District 25 News* will review the outcome of these final weeks of session and provide reports on the critical budget and revenue bills that will be passed. If you have immediate questions or concerns, however, please feel free to contact my office at 586-9425 or at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.

With aloha,

Della Au Belatti
State Representative, District 25

Above photo—Queen Kaahumanu Elementary School (March 30, 2010)—L-R—Councilmember Ann Kobayashi, Queen Kaahumanu Parent Community Networking Coordinator Diane Awo, Senator Carol Fukunaga, Representative Della Au Belatti, and Schnitzer Steel Hawaii Recycling Coordinator Rene Mansho celebrate with a check presentation for the school's participation in the Aloha Aina community recycling event conducted on Saturday, December 19, 2009.

HACBED

Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development

2010 Tax Season Workshops

Tax season is upon us! Many District 25 residents are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other tax credits. These credits are important for local families and often go unclaimed. In an effort to ensure residents claim these credits, legislators have teamed with Aloha United Way (AUW) and the Hawaii Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development (HACBED) to provide free tax assistance throughout the state for qualifying families and individuals.

AUW's Family and Individual Self-Sufficiency Program is the only statewide coordinated effort that recruits, supports, and works with community partners to provide free tax assistance services to qualified workers. From January to April, free tax sites are staffed and run by IRS-certified community volunteers who assist Hawai'i residents in preparing their federal and state tax returns.

This year, the offices of Representative Belatti, Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, AUW, and HACBED hosted two special tax clinics in March at the State Capitol and Makiki District Park. (Sorry if you signed up for the February 27 workshop-it got canceled by the tsunami!) The Capitol workshop served 39 taxpayers resulting in \$60,970 in refunds. Out of this, these taxpayers claimed \$8,295 in earned income tax credits.

The EITC is a valuable tax credit for low-to-moderate income workers that reduces poverty. Considered to be the nation's most successful anti-poverty program, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the IRS



STATE CAPITOL (March 13, 2010): Waipahu High School certified tax preparers with HACBED Program Coordinator Susan Tamanaha and Representative Belatti.

estimate that the EITC lifts approximately 4.4 million people, including 2.4 million children, out of poverty each year. Annually, over \$40 billion in EITC benefits are paid out to eligible taxpayers across the United States, exceeding the Temporary Assistance for Need Families and Food Stamp Programs.

Researchers have also credited the EITC with raising labor force participation levels and helping families transition from welfare to work. For some workers, the EITC can represent a 30 to 40% increase in income; and since the EITC is only available to those with *earned* income (ie. workers), the EITC is a proven incentive for people to become and stay employed, thereby reducing their reliance on public welfare assistance.

Eligible taxpayers who claim the EITC also stimulate the local economy. Annually, it is estimated that Hawaii workers fail to claim between \$31,299,580 and \$41,732,301 in the EITC. In 2007, Hawaii taxpayers received more than \$155 million in EITC benefits. If only 75% of last year's EITC benefits were used to purchase goods and services, this generated more than \$4.6 million in state general excise taxes. Therefore, every year that Hawaii taxpayers fail to claim benefits like the EITC, local businesses lose out on millions of dollars that would be spent and the State loses out on revenues.



STATE CAPITOL (March 13, 2010): Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement volunteers Rose Nagasako & Terri Lemmer take a break from greeting clients to pose with Representative Belatti.

For help on your future tax returns, workshops, and more information on the benefits of the EITC and other credits, call the AUW helpline at 211 or visit HACBED at www.hawaiiataxhelp.org.

BIG MONEY POLITICS: A NEW ERA FOR CORPORATE POLITICAL DONATIONS

Since the beginning of our country's founding, citizens have had concerns about the effect of corporate contributions on our democracy. As we head into the 2010 election season, landmark judicial decisions have wrought changes to federal and state campaign finance laws that will result in greater corporate influence.

Judicial Cases Alter Corporate Expenditures and Reporting

Two recent decisions by the United States Supreme Court and the Hawaii Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) have altered the way corporations and unions can influence our electoral system.

In January 2010, the US Supreme Court in *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission* controversially ruled in a 5-4 decision that government cannot ban corporations from supporting candidates through independent political communications. Based on the legal fiction that classifies corporations as "citizens" and treating corporations like natural persons, the Court held that corporations are entitled to First Amendment free speech protections.

As a result of *Citizens United*, corporations and unions are allowed to

spend unlimited amounts on independent expenditures from their corporate treasuries. Despite the loosening of regulations on corporate expenditures, the Court did not overturn the federal ban on corporate donations given directly to candidates and disclosure of corporate expenditures as permissible government regulations of speech.

In June 2009, the Hawaii ICA ruled in *Tavares v. Wong* that a corporation or company making contributions directly from their treasuries to candidate committees do not have to register as noncandidate committees and, effectively, do not have to file disclosure reports with the Hawaii State Campaign Spending Commission.

2010 Legislative Response

In response to concerns raised by individuals and organizations about these court decisions, the Legislature has taken two steps to minimize the effect of large amounts of corporate monies flowing into Hawaii's elections.

House Concurrent Resolution 282

HCR 282 requests Congress to pass and send to the states for ratification a constitutional amendment to clar-

ify the distinctions between the rights of natural persons and the rights of corporations. This constitutional clarification would then clearly allow Congress and states to limit corporate political spending to the benefit of ordinary citizens being able to participate equally in the democratic process.

House Bill 2003 HD3 SD3

HB 2003 began as a recodification bill that updates and clarifies Hawaii's state campaign finance laws. First enacted in 1973, the current law has been amended over the past 37 years in a piecemeal fashion that has led to results like *Tavares*. Now positioned in conference committee, HB2003 has become the primary vehicle to achieve greater transparency on corporate contributions in light of *Tavares*.

Legislators and advocates have offered proposed language to prohibit or reestablish a low limit on corporate donations given directly to candidate committees and to mandate reporting from corporations through noncandidate committees. To follow the progress of HB2003 as it progresses through conference committee, visit www.capitol.hawaii.gov and click on "Bill Status & Docs."

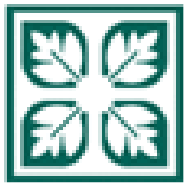
The Hawaii Campaign Spending Commission: The Commission enforces and ensures compliance with campaign spending laws and provides transparency of campaign financing to the public.

Candidate Committees: In Hawaii, candidate committees are created to accept contributions or make expenditures on behalf of a candidate with the candidate's authorization.

Noncandidate Committees: Noncandidate committees are created for the purpose of making contributions or expenditures to influence elections of candidates to political office or to influence ballot issues. Following *Tavares v. Wong*, there is no requirement that corporations create noncandidate committees in order to donate directly to candidate committees.

Reporting Requirements: All committees must electronically report monetary and non-monetary contributions within certain deadlines. Noncandidate committees must report their donations to candidate committees and other campaign related expenditures. Because corporations no longer need to give through noncandidate committees, they can give up to the appropriate limits per candidates and do not need to report their donations. The only way to know the total amount of any corporation's donations would be to investigate reports of every candidate committee.

See who gets what? Visit www.hawaii.gov/campaign or call the Commission at 586-0285.



Catholic Charities Hawaii Overhauls & Upgrades Its Makiki Campus

For decades, government has partnered with faith communities to better serve those in need. These programs keep families together and help individuals transition through life's turbulent times. Throughout the 20th century, poverty in America has been fought on the front lines by faith communities and organizations like Catholic Charities who have improved our communities at large.

Nationally, Catholic Charities USA provides services to 8.5 million people of all faiths each year and serves as the nationwide office for over 1,700 local Catholic Charities agencies. Established under the leadership of the Maryknoll Sisters, Catholic Charities Hawaii began its work in Hawaii in 1944. Today, Catholic Charities Hawaii continues its social mission of serving the people of Hawaii, without regard to their faith or culture, and promoting the dignity of each person by empowering them to help themselves.

havioral problems, unplanned pregnancies, adult violence and abuse, difficulties encountered by immigrants and refugees, difficulties adjusting to life's challenges, and sustaining independent living for seniors and persons with developmental disabilities.

In 2006, to better manage its programs and services at one location, Catholic Charities Hawaii purchased the former First Presbyterian Church located at 1822 Keeaumoku Street in Makiki. The site has undergone significant renovations during the last two years and now serves as Catholic Charities Hawaii's Program Center, housing over 170 counselors, social workers, and service providers.

Upon moving its programs into its Makiki campus, Catholic Charities sought to maintain the same 2.2 acre geographic footprint in Makiki while making significant internal alterations to the buildings. The interior of the church has been split

grams, explained while Catholic Charities Hawaii "didn't want to impose on the neighborhood or community." To this end, the organization kept its street facing façade and provided parking to all employees and visitors to lessen impact to the surrounding community. "We knew the community [also] wanted us to keep the local police office, so we made sure to do that," stated Stella Wong. HPD currently uses one office as a sub-station.

Now that Catholic Charities Hawaii has a central campus, it continues to fundraise for this major capital project. Beginning in 2010, Catholic Charities Hawaii launched its "10 in 10" campaign to raise the final \$10 million required to pay the \$28 million price tag.

Assisted by generous donors like the Ching Foundation who provided a matching \$1 million grant, Catholic Charities aims its fundraising efforts at Hawaii



In accomplishing this mission, Catholic Charities Hawaii serves more than 60,000 people in over 30 statewide programs in the following eight categories of service: child abuse and neglect, homelessness, children's emotional and be-



into two levels and now includes a main reception area, offices, cubicles, and counseling rooms.

Sensitive to being good neighbors, Stella Wong, Vice President of Pro-



and national foundations, government, corporations, other community organizations, and individuals. Interested in giving to the 10 in 10 campaign? Contact Jeanette Mori at jeanette.mori@catholiccharitieshawaii.org or at 527-4823.